

PENDING CLAIMS

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2 1. (Canceled)

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4 2. A method for a computer repairing itself to an operational status at any time
5 during operation, the method comprising the computer-executed steps of:

6 booting from a first hard disk drive boot device disposed within a main computer
7 hardware box of the computer;

8 then, in response to receiving a signal indicating a need for repair of the computer
9 during the booting or during any operating state, booting from a second hard disk drive boot
10 device; the second hard disk drive boot device being physically present within the main
11 computer hardware box of the computer prior to receiving the signal indicating a need for
12 repair; and

13 then repairing software on the first hard disk drive boot device while booted from the
14 second hard disk drive boot device and selectively either: (i) maintaining operation of the
15 computer from the second boot device to restore operational status of the computer during
16 repairing of the software on the first hard disk device, or (ii) changing to operation of the
17 computer from the second boot device to the first boot device to restore operational status of
18 the computer,

19 wherein the signal is generated by a user altering the state of a physical switch
20 different from an on-off switch of the computer and exposed on an exterior surface of the
21 main computer hardware box of the computer.

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23 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of repairing software comprises:
24 automatically repairing software on the first boot device.

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26 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of automatically repairing software
27 comprises:

28 automatically repairing software on the first boot device without further direction
29 from the user.

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31 5. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of automatically repairing software
32 comprises:

33 repairing software on the first boot device according to preset preferences.

1 6. The method of claim 5, wherein the repairing according to preset preferences
2 comprises:

3 repairing according to whether
4 to recover data;
5 to run a virus check;
6 to reformat the first boot device;
7 to revert to a backup; or
8 to run diagnostics.

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10 7. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of repairing software comprises:
11 reformatting the first boot device; and
12 then copying software onto the first boot device.

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14 8. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of repairing software comprises:
15 resetting parameters in a persistent memory; and
16 then copying software onto the first boot device.

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18 9. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of:
19 directing a user to re-boot from the first boot device.

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21 10. The method of claim 2, wherein before the step of booting from the second
22 boot device, the following step is performed: installing software onto the second boot device.

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24 11. The method of claim 10, wherein the step of installing software onto the
25 second boot device comprises one method from the following set of methods:

26 a. installing software onto the second boot device;
27 b. copying installed software onto the second boot device;
28 c. copying installation software onto the second boot device; and
29 d. writing onto the second boot device a version of an operating environment running
30 as a result of the boot from the first boot device.

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32 12. The method of claim 10, wherein the step of installing software onto the
33 second boot device comprises one method from the following set of methods:

34 a. installing software onto the second boot device;

1 b. copying installed software onto the second boot device;
2 c. copying installation software onto the second boot device; and
3 d. writing onto the second boot device a template of an operating environment
4 running as a result of the boot from the first boot device.

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6 13. The method of claim 10, wherein after the step of installing and before the
7 step of booting from the second boot device, the following step is performed:
8 updating the software installed onto the second boot device.

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10 14. The method of claim 10, wherein after the step of installing and before the
11 step of booting from the second boot device, the following step is performed:
12 protecting the second boot device from further modification.

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14 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of protecting comprises one of:
15 switching the second boot device to a state of unavailability; and
16 switching the second boot device to a read-only state.

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18 16. The method of claim 2, wherein before the step of repairing software the
19 following step is performed:
20 offering a user a choice of thoroughness of repair.

21
22 17. The method of claim 2, wherein before the step of booting from the second
23 boot device, the following step is performed:
24 automatically monitoring an operating environment running as a result of the booting
25 from the first boot device.

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27 18. The method of claim 17, further comprising the step of:
28 detecting an undesirable change in the operating environment; and
29 generating the signal indicating a need for repair in response to the detection.

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31 19. The method of claim 2, wherein before the step of booting from the second
32 boot device, the following step is performed:
33 automatically searching for boot devices.

1 20. A method for a computer repairing itself to an operational status at any time
2 during operation, the method comprising the computer-executed steps of:

3 booting from a first hard disk drive boot device disposed within a main computer
4 hardware box of the computer;

5 then, in response to receiving a signal indicating a need for repair of the computer
6 during the booting or during any operating state, booting from a second hard disk drive boot
7 device; the second hard disk drive boot device being physically present within the main
8 computer hardware box of the computer prior to receiving the signal indicating a need for
9 repair; and

10 then repairing software on the first hard disk drive boot device while booted from the
11 second hard disk drive boot device and selectively either: (i) maintaining operation of the
12 computer from the second boot device to restore operational status of the computer during
13 repairing of the software on the first hard disk device, or (ii) changing to operation of the
14 computer from the second boot device to the first boot device to restore operational status of
15 the computer;

16 wherein before the step of repairing software the following step is performed:
17 offering a user a choice of thoroughness of repair selected from the set of repairs consisting
18 of a quick repair that re-installs or copies template software without first re-formatting, a
19 better repair that performs a high-level re-format before that copy or re-installation of
20 software, and a best repair that performs a low-level re-format before copying over or re-
21 installing software.

22 21. A computer system comprising:

23 one or more peripheral devices including a means for communication, an coupling
24 member, and a capability for emitting light;

25 a receptacle mechanically coupled with said computer system for engaging said
26 coupling member of said peripheral device; and

27 a port for communicatively coupling said computer system and said peripheral
28 devices coupled with receptacle.